Riverboat Adventure

By Ken St. Andre

Introduction:

This is meant to be a very short adventure for players new to Tunnels and Trolls. It should be used with the edition 5.5 rules.

Setting up the adventure:

Any reasonable number of players can be accommodated, but for best results, there should be at least 4 player characters and no more than 12. One player per character is best for beginners, but if four or more players are not available, let each player run two characters.

First, roll up a new character for each player. This is a human-centered adventure, and basic human characters are best, but players may also create Elves, Dwarves, Uruks, or Skeletonmen. Any of these kindreds could work together on a riverboat adventure.

Tell the characters that they have wandered into the city of Khosht to seek their fortune, or get a job, or learn to be an adventurer. For one reason or another, they will all wind up taking a job as a poleman/guard on the Khoshti riverboat: The Drunken Dwarf. If they don't want a job on the Drunken Dwarf, they can wander off and play the character in somebody else's adventure. (Grin).

Setting up the Adventurer:

As new characters, the players should all have 3D6 X 10 gold pieces with which to buy equipment and weapons. The first part of the adventure will be to take all these new adventurers to the riverside market and let them buy some gear.

What can they buy? Anything they want, and anything they can afford! The T & T rulebook has tables of weapons and supplies along with typical prices. They will certainly want some kind of basic weaponry—they start only with a 2D6 eating dirk.

The market contains armorers, grocers, charm sellers, wizards, clothiers, thieves, fast-food sellers, guards, and citizens of all types. There will be no difficulty in finding someone to sell anything the players want to buy.

Players may wish to bargain with the merchants. If this happens, have the player make the highest level saving roll that he can on his INT. If he can't even make level one, then the merchant gets to double the price of the item. If he makes level one, but not level two, the price remains the same as that in the rulebook. If the player makes level 2 or better, then he completely outplayed the merchant, and may take as many gold pieces off the price as he made the saving roll by. If that takes the price to negative numbers, the merchant will give the player the item.

If players wish to equip themselves with material taken directly from the rulebook tables, allow them to do so and pay the rulebook prices. If they wish something not shown in the rules, then they must find a merchant and bargain for what they want.

Players may find an appropriate merchant by making either a Luck or Intelligence Saving Roll. (The player can choose his/her better attribute for this.) Make the highest level saving roll that one can and check below.

Saving roll check:

Couldn't even make L1SR—player finds a cheat. Whatever is bought will prove to be very shoddy indeed and break, wear out, poison the buyer, etc. at first opportunity.

L1SR—merchant has used goods. Sell for about half the rulebook price, but describe the material as rather worn or low quality. If it is a weapon, then during the first real fight, have the player make luck saving rolls to see if it breaks.

L2SR—merchant has good stuff. Charge rulebook prices (or wing it) and there will be no problems with merchandise later.

L3SR or higher—merchant has magical stuff. Charge extra, but offer a free enchantment of some kind. (For weapons offer +1 combat add for each 10 gold pieces extra spent on it.

Talk to each player. Give them all a chance to buy something special or unusual from the market. Give them all a chance to make a saving roll. Demonstrate how it works (roll 2D6, doubles add and roll over; multiply number rolled by level of saving roll for adventure points awarded.)

Don't take too much time on this. Don't let the players bog down. If this gets too slow, tell them the boat is about to leave and they have to go.

Set the scene:

The Khosht River isn't especially large or long as rivers go, but it does serve the western part of the Dragon continent as a dividing line between the deserts of the south and the forests of the midlands. Several medium-sized cities line its bank—all on the forested side, logically enough. The cities of Khosht and Knor lie about 100 miles apart with Khosht further upstream. Most river traffic takes the form of keelboats and small barges and skiffs.

The open air market in Khosht is right down by the river docks. It is a blustery day, windy, cloudy, a few spatters of rain. Hundreds of merchants have set up shop in the market. But you're done with that now. Time to board your boat; The Drunken Dwarf and meet Captain Tarndag.

Captain Tarndag is your employer, a Dwarf of indeterminate age—certainly more than a century, probably less than three. His hair is black and bushy with beetling eyebrows. His beard is full and covers his chest down to his waist. He's four feet tall, four feet wide, and almost four feet thick, and gives the impression of a short square peg.

When the players first meet him, he wanders around with a heavy flagon of ale in one hand, and speaks in a slurred voice. He promises the players 10 gold pieces a day, and a chance for bonuses. Tarndag has armor and weapons, but they won't be seen when he meets the crew as it comes aboard.

The boat is a keelboat, some 60 feet long and about 10 feet wide in the beam. There is a long, low narrow cabin in the center of the boat, and the captain and the passengers have rooms inside it. There is a front hatch and a rear hatch, and a low cargo hold beneath the deck. There is a cleated walkway on each side of the boat running from prow to stern, and only a very small scupper marking the edge of the boat. It would be very easy to fall or dive off the edge. The keelboat is propelled by the means of long poles which are used by the polesmen to push against the bottom of the river. The boatman plants the pole at an angle and then walks from the prow to the stern, thus pushing the boat forward. One man couldn't do it, but with 10 or more evenly divided on both sides of the boat, it can be pushed along, even against the current at a slow but steady rate. Much of the time, the boat will simply float downstream with the current. The boat is steered by a rudder, and an experienced boatman will always be stationed there.

Captain Tarndag has a regular crew of about 10 people, four dwarves, four humans, two uruk dogbrothers named Jaran and Taxx. He has a mate named Long Torrm who will be in charge of the player characters. The Captain tends to stay in his cabin unless he's needed on deck. The crew will be involved in the adventure later, but they don't need attributes or names—they are simply there to keep the players from being overwhelmed in the situations that will develop later.

By midmorning the Captain wants to get underway. This is a short two day trip down the river to the town of Knor. It should be easy—it's downriver all the way. But there have been reports of river pirates, and the captain wants a few extra guards, hence, the players have been hired as guards and polesmen.

The players all take their poles and positions along the side of the keelboat. They have to help push it away from the dock and out into the current. This will call for a L1SR on DEX. If any player misses the saving roll, have him fall into the river and take a point of CON damage. The regular crew will think this is extremely funny. Nobody can drown this close to the dock—they will all be rescued, and docked a gold piece for losing a valuable pole

The Passengers:

The Drunken Dwarf is taking four passengers down to Knor. They are:

1. **Karlya the Food Vendor** is a middle-aged human female who is relocating her fast food business to Knor. She has two barrels of supplies and hopes to get some of her material during the trip. She sells apples for a copper piece each, and a kind of fish taco for a silver piece. She is willing to cook other people's food for a small fee—say 5 coppers per meal. We don't need attribute numbers for Karlya. In case of fighting, she will hide in the passengers cabin. Her prices are low but fair, and she can't really take any less for her food without losing money.

2. Maroo the Marvelous (His own name for himself) is a level 1 human rogue. He makes his living as a vendor of lucky charms, some of which he will be happy to sell to the player characters. He will not fight, but will hide in the passenger cabin during any encounters. Maroo has 3 different types of charms for sale. Paper charms cost 1D6 silver pieces and he will write a character on a piece of paper that is meant to be kept in an amulet (which he will be happy to sell you for a gold piece). The charms are to make the bearer luckier, smarter, healthier, stronger, etc. He will also sell charms against drowning. The more the character pays, the more magic Maroo will put into the charm. He warns that paper charms only work once, and then they self destruct. When the paper falls apart or bursts into flame, you know the magic has worked. (In fact, the paper charms are a complete scam, but his best selling items. The paper has been doctored with a chemical that will cause it to spontaneously combust within a few hours of purchase.) Maroo's second line consists of small copper statuettes of the Luck gods. In fact, these are the crudest possible little statues of people you could ever wish to see. Like the paper, they can be enchanted to enhance any attribute, or do other vaguer things like protect against lightning, or turn away anger. Those who can sense magic will actually sense a faint magic on these charms—Maroo had them all enchanted to glow in the dark before he ever got on board, and the fact that they glow is his proof of how magical they are. Prices start at a gold piece and escalate to as much as Maroo can get anyone to pay him. Maroo has an Intelligence of 15, a Luck of 16, a Dexterity of 14, a Charisma of 12, a Strength of 10, a Constitution of 9, and a Speed of 13. Maroo's third line consists of enchanted coins. These are actual magical talismans which he had made for him by the Wizards Guild back in Khosht. These charms do various things—a popular one is the copper piece that glows bright red when the bearer is in danger. Another popular one is the weapon enchanter coin, and a small packet of glue for affixing it to any weapon. This coin technically makes the weapon into a magic weapon. The coin will glow faintly in the dark, and add 1d6 to the weapon's power. The game master can make up other magical coins based on what the players might be seeking. These coins start at 10 gold pieces and may cost more.

Players may bargain with Maroo. The bargaining takes the form of a contest, with both Maroo and the player making saving rolls on their Intelligence—each one level higher than the last. For example, Maroo has an Intelligence of 15. If Maroo makes his saving roll and the customer fails his, then the sale goes through for 10 gold plus whatever the margin of making the roll was for Maroo. (Example: L1SR on Intelligence. Maroo (the GM) rolls an 8 and makes it by 3. The player rolls a 5 and misses by 1. The customer happily pays Maroo 13 gold for the 10 gold piece item.) If Maroo misses the saving roll while the customer makes his, then the difference is subtracted from the price.

In addition to the charms he sells, Maroo also knows a couple of spells: Take That You Fiend, Knock Knock, and Lock Tight. He also has a cheap magic wand with the magic power of sparkling brightly when Maroo pretends to enchant things with it. It's excellent for fooling the unsophisticated customer.

The Game Master can play Maroo as a bit of a pest. He will always be asking the players if they'd like to buy a charm to improve their fishing, or remove the family curse, etc. Have fun with this!

3. **Halagalatindoofiel** is an Elfin minstrel. Everyone calls her Hala. She is everything your mother warned you about in elves—beautiful, sexy, amoral and tricky. She plays a 7-stringed balakandra (an elfin instrument akin to a banjo). Her singing is delightful. In the event of a fight, she too will hide in the passenger cabin.

Hala will entertain the crew with music as the boat glides downriver, and hope for tips. If any of the players pay any attention to her, she will try to wheedle some money out of them, promising anything to get them to give her their cash. Any player who dares to encounter her must make a L3SR on Charisma to keep his/her wits about him/her. Failing that, the player voluntarily gives Hala all his money and gets a few elfin kisses in return. Hala teases and teases, but never delivers anything but enchanting melody to her customers.

4. Shuna the Healer. This healer is an herbalist and is well-taught in the lore of poisons and potions. She sells general healing potions that will cure 1D6 + 1 points of CON damage for only 5 gold pieces each. (Effects are variable depending on the user's resistance to magic—at least that's what Shuna tells them.). Shuna is also an accomplished medic. She can set broken bones, stop bleeding, and cast the Poor Baby spell if she has to. Kindly and empathetic, Shuna is also old and ugly, so few will want to spend much time in her company. She is actually a wizard and has a STR rating of 24, although her INT is only 16.

(Note to the Game Master: The passengers stay out of the fighting and will survive as long as any of the players survive, and possibly longer. I suppose the passengers die if the boat sinks or is taken by foemen.)

The First River Encounter

Call for a volunteer player character (or two) to serve as forward lookouts on the boat. In midafternoon, have the character make a L1SR on Intelligence or Luck (whichever is better). If the saving roll is made, give the character this dialog:

"Up ahead! The river is alive!"

Long Torrm leaps to the front of the boat. He scans the river ahead. "We're in luck!" he yells. "The watersnakes are migrating!" He leaps to the cabin door and sticks his head inside, "Cap'n, on deck, it's watersnakes!"

"Woo hoo!" bellows Tarndag, storming on deck with a battleaxe in his stubby hand. "Watersnakes are goooooood eatin'! Mate, prepare poles for snake catchin'!"

"You new men, watch this," orders Long Torrm. As the prow of the boat cuts into the huge mass (thousands and thousands of swimming watersnakes), he takes one of the push poles and slips it under the surface of the water almost horizontally. With a quick flip of his wrists, he jerks the pole out of the water and shoots eight watersnakes into the air. They fly up and land on the boat, where the regular crew men leap on them with clubs and daggers and quickly dispatch them.

"All passengers below decks!" bellows Captain Tarndag. The four passengers quickly get into their two small cabins.

"Who wants to try some snake catching?" asks Long Torrm. (Give all the players an opportunity to use the poles to flip snakes onto the boat. Each player needs a L1SR on DEX to flip snakes aboard successfully. Each flip sends 2D6 worth of snakes up onto the boat.)

Players who aren't flipping snakes aboard suddenly find mildly poisonous watersnakes raining down on their heads. Roll 1d6 for each player caught thus by surprise. Each watersnake has a monster rating of 6 (that is 1D6 + 3 in combat). Thus, anyone who isn't flipping snakes aboard finds themselves fighting them.

These beautiful green and orange-banded snakes are mildly venomous. If a player takes any damage while fighting them, that player will be poisoned. Go ahead and scare the players with the idea that they are poisoned, but the players will take no more than 3 hits of poison damage total. Shuna has an antidote for this poison that she will sell for 1 gold piece.

Players can flip snakes aboard for 3 turns. If this is done cleverly, the players will flip more snakes on board than they will be able to cope

with. Each turn add another 1D6 worth of snakes to how many each character must fight. Emphasize that the regular crew is also flipping snakes aboard, and fighting them.

By turn 4 players should realize they are in trouble and stop flipping snakes aboard, but by this time they are in the thickest part of the swarm. Snakes begin crawling aboard on their own. Now everyone is fighting desperately to slay serpents. Only follow the players attempts to slay them and stay alive. Each round add another 1D6 of snakes that our players must fight. After round 5 don't add any more.

For drama, have an unnamed crew member fall over the side into the swarm of snakes swimming by. His screams are hideous, but quickly cut off. Have another with four or five snakes biting him at the same time, and his skin blackening before the players' eyes.

Let there be a desperate battle. Remember that even if players go down, they are not actually dead until they reach -10 CON. Once a player goes down, the snakes will stop attacking him. They really just want to get back off the boat and into the river.

If it looks like the players are going to succumb to the snake infestation, have Captain Tarndag and his crew rescue them.

When the fight is over, give the players a chance to patch up their wounds. Let the healer come out and heal those who are most badly injured. Award bounties of one silver piece each per snake slain. Have Karlya cook up delicious snake suppers for everyone. Let Captain Tarndag say a few words for the two crewmen who were lost—something like "They knew the job was dangerous when they took it."

The Second River Encounter:

The rest of the afternoon and early evening passes uneventfully. Choose two other players to keep watch that evening. The night gets dark. The boat drifts gently down the river in the center. Clouds cover the two moons, but torches are lit on deck to give the men a little light. Crew and players are sleeping on deck, or on the cabin top wherever they could find room to put down a blanket.

About midnight, have the watchmen make a L1SR on CON to see if they have fallen asleep when they should have been watching. If they are both asleep, that is bad. If either or both are still awake, have them make a L2SR on INT. They will see what looks like several logs drifting toward the Drunken Dwarf. No, those look more like canoes.

Having realized that canoes are rapidly approaching, they give the alarm.

(If both guardians had fallen asleep, then have Long Torrm checking on them. He will discover the approaching canoes in time to give the alarm. He'll also kick the sleepers rudely into wakefulness.)

It's the dreaded Captain Fyke and his scurvy river pirates. Several canoes will catch up to the keelboat and pirates will swarm aboard. Thanks to the alarm, all players & crew will wake up & fight for their lives.

The river pirates are as motley a lot of orcs, hobgoblins, and human scum as you'd ever want to see. Mostly they wear ragged cutoff pantaloons, and loin cloths, and mangy hides. They are armed with big knives and clubs along with a few fish spears. Only the captain is better dressed—he's an almost foppish man dressed in black and crimson coat and britches. His wide-brimmed hat sports a big black feather. His skin is sallow and yellowish. His eyes are large and bloodshot; his teeth big and yellow. He has long drooping black mustachios that dangle down past his shoulders, and his hair worn in a long twisted black braid that hangs down between his shoulders. He is armed with a good cutlass.

Each of the players will have to account for two pirates in order to do their share of the fighting.

In combat round one the players need only face a single foe. Their second foe will join the struggle on round two.

Although the different pirates would have slightly different attributes, they will all be around this average. The game master can use this as a typical river pirate for the fights. This will be a number of individual fights.

Average River Pirate

L1 Warrior

STR 14 CON 14 DEX 10 SPD 11
INT 8 LK 8 WIZ 10 CHR 5
Combat adds: 1.
Armor: None. Weapon: Sax 2D6 + 5 or Club 3D6.
Spells: None. Treasure (if slain) 1D6 silver pieces plus 2D6 copper pieces.

Captain Fyke is a bit more formidable.

Name: Captain Jangarr Fyke
L2 Rogue
STR 16 CON 18 DEX 15 SPD 13
INT 20 LK 22 CHR 17
Combat adds: 18.
Armor: None. Weapon: Cutlass (3D6 + 3) Sax (2D6 + 5)
Spells: Take That You Fiend, Poor Baby.

This night time battle should be fought as a series of individual encounters. If a player finishes both his foes, he may help another player who isn't doing so well.

Captain Tarndag will come on deck and face Captain Fyke. The players should be too busy with their own foes to do much about it. They get the impression of a dwarf in chain mail fighting a maniac in black and crimson. It is double-bladed dwarven battleaxe and spiked dwarven shield against cutlass and dagger. Time after time Tarndag's armor stops a blow that would have slain an unarmored fighter.

(The battle between the captains should reflect the battle between the players and their foes. If the players win, then Tarndag wins. If the players lose, then Fyke wins. For each player who dies in battle, Tarndag will lose 2 of his crewmen. If the players win their fights, then so will the crew, but they will still lose 1D6 crewmen. The passengers hide.)

If the pirates win the battle, the adventure is functionally over. If the riverboatmen win, then they can patch up their wounds and go on to Encounter Three.

The Third River Encounter

The battered riverboat floats down the Khosht River on the following morning. Everyone is resting from the fight of the night before when suddenly the boat comes to a violent halt. Have every player make a L2SR on STR. If they make it, the jolt does not knock them off their feet. If they miss the saving roll, they are knocked off their feet. If they fumble the saving roll (roll of 1, 2), then the get pitched into the river.

The boat has struck an underwater boom set up in the main channel by river trolls. This thickly twisted rope, set up between two underwater rocks, stops the boat cold and river trolls swarm aboard.

Again, this will be a battle of individuals. There are a lot of river trolls, one for each member of the players that still survives and enough left over to keep Captain Tarndag and his crew fighting for their lives.

The river trolls are somewhat crocodilian in appearance. They are about 8 feet tall, 5 feet wide, with scaly green skin. They have large froglike heads with great gaping mouths, each of which contains exactly 8 needle-like fangs. But they do not look much like frogs, really. They don't have long tongues. They do have large brainpans, and a kind of oily dark hair that runs down their back in a shaggy mat that is almost fur. They have long crocodilian tales that hang down behind them. Their hands and feet are equipped with large dull claws, the equivalent of iron knives. They roar and chatter among themselves as they attack, and although they have neither weapons nor tools, there is no doubt that the attack was planned and executed by intelligent beings.

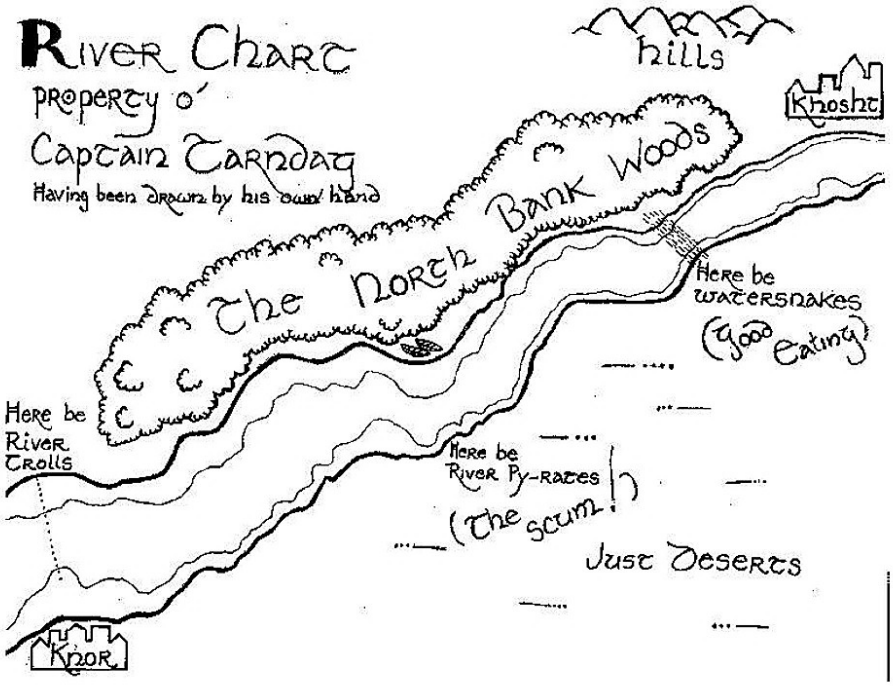
Each river troll has a monster rating of 34 (4D6 + 17) in combat. Their goals are simple—swarm aboard, capture a victim, then dive overboard to feast at leisure. Players may help each other with the trolls, but each will have to face one alone in the first round at least. Player characters whose CON drops to zero will be subdued, and if not rescued on the very next combat turn, they will go overboard and meet a horrible fate.

For each player that goes down, two crewmen will go down. If all the players go down, then the boat will be taken with no survivors. If any

players survive, then Captain, Mate, and Passengers will all survive.

Fight this final battle. If any player survives, then the boat survives and reaches the town of Knor about an hour later. Pay off the players. They should get 10 gold pieces plus any loot they managed to obtain—a good trick since only the river pirates had any loot, and they didn't have much. Congratulate them on becoming adventurers.

The End



Notes to the G.M.:

Captain Tarndag and his first mate Long Torrm have been kept vague on purpose. These are experienced boatmen and fighters. You can use them to step in and rescue a player once or twice during the game. The presence of a healer among the passengers means no one has to remain wounded when a battle is over. It is possible that players will have wizards, or spellcasting rogues in their party. If they can do magic, let them.

Let the characters talk to each other, and to people on the boat. Long Torrm is your chief character to roleplay with your players, but you can also take on the roles of any of the passengers or crew. During the melees, mention how fiercely the Uruk dogbrothers fight, how they howl and caper over their defeated foes, and how they work together. Let your imagination roll with the river.

Remember to ask yourself what would reasonably happen next. If someone falls in the river, fish them back out. If someone acts courteously and gallantly toward the passengers, give them a small reward. If someone wants to be a stinker, administer a bit of poetic justice. Above all, look for elements of humor in the game, and see if you can make your players laugh from time to time.

—Ken St. Andre